IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.   (Previously Presented)   A method for providing annotation information for a set of data, comprising:

querying an annotation store to retrieve one or more annotation records, each annotation record associated with a portion of the set of data and having one or more annotation fields, wherein the set of data is a relational table containing query results;

generating a linking value identifying the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records;

consolidating data contained in the annotation fields;

returning an annotation data structure comprising a field containing the linking value and a field containing the consolidated data; and

joining the annotation data structure with the set of data using the generated linking value.

2.   (Original)   The method of claim 1, further comprising returning the set of data with the annotation data structure.

3.   (Canceled)

4.   (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 1, comprising joining the annotation data structure with the set of data prior to returning the annotation data structure.

5.   (Original)   The method of claim 1, wherein the linking value comprises primary key data.

6.   (Original)   The method of claim 5, wherein the primary key data comprises compound primary key data involving at least two fields.

7.   (Original)   The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving a query to retrieve the annotation data, the query identifying the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records.

8.   (Original)   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a query to retrieve the set of data; and

issuing the query against a data source separate from the annotation store to retrieve the set of data.

9.   (Original)   A method for providing user data and corresponding annotation data, comprising:

receiving, from a requesting entity, a query to return the user data;

retrieving the user data from a data source;

retrieving, from an annotation store, one or more annotation records associated with the one or more annotated portions of the user data;

consolidating annotation data contained in the annotation records;

joining the consolidated annotation data with the user data to generate a data structure containing the consolidated data; and

returning, to the requesting entity, the generated data structure.

10.   (Original)   The method of claim 9, further comprising generating one or more linking values identifying the one or more annotated portions of the user data.

11.   (Original)   The method of claim 10, wherein the linking values are utilized in the joining.

12.   (Previously Presented)   A computer-readable storage medium containing a program for returning annotation data which, when executed by a processor, performs operations comprising:

querying an annotation store to retrieve one or more annotation records, each annotation record associated with a portion of the set of data and having one or more annotation fields, wherein the set of data is a relational table containing query results;

generating a linking value identifying the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records;

consolidating data contained in the annotation fields;

returning an annotation data structure comprising a field containing the linking value and a field containing the consolidated data.

joining the annotation data structure with the set of data using the generated linking value.

13. (Previously Presented)   The computer-readable storage medium of claim 12, wherein the operations further comprise returning the set of data with the annotation data structure.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Previously Presented)   The computer-readable storage medium of claim 12, wherein the operations further comprise receiving a query to retrieve the annotation data, the query identifying the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records.

16. (Previously Presented)   The computer-readable storage medium of claim 12, wherein the operations further comprise:

receiving a query to retrieve the set of data; and

issuing the query against a data source separate from the annotation store to retrieve the set of data.

17. (Previously Presented)   A system for providing annotation information for a set of data comprising a relational table containing query results, comprising:

an annotation database for storing annotation records containing annotation data; and

an executable component configured to query the annotation store to retrieve one or more annotation records, each annotation record associated with a portion of the set of data and having one or more annotation fields, generate a linking value identifying

the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records, consolidate data contained in the annotation fields, [[and]] return an annotation data structure comprising a field containing the linking value and a field containing the consolidated data, and join the consolidated annotation data structure with the set of data using the generated linking value.

18.   (Original)   The system of claim 17, wherein the executable component is further configured to return the set of data with the annotation data structure.

19.   (Currently Amended)   The system of claim 18, wherein the executable component is further configured to retrieve the [[user]] <u>set of</u> data from a data source separate from the annotation store.

20.   (Currently Amended)   The system of claim 18, wherein the executable component is further configured to join the consolidated annotation data with the [[user]] <u>set of</u> data, using the linking value, prior to returning the set of data with the annotation structure.